

# The Evening Star

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## We Win A Race

The outcome of the great missile race is settled. We are so far ahead we can afford to slow down. Russia cannot catch up unless we simply stop. One frightening era, in which we often frightened ourselves unnecessarily, closes; and another, in which deliberate nuclear war between the two great powers is almost impossible, opens. It's a hopeful way to start the new year.

The first Sputnik in 1957 marked the beginning of real public concern over the missile race. Russia showed then that she had the skill to build an all-destroying arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles, using the same rockets that lifted Sputnik. America raced to be the first to build such a force, but it was a late start, and the handicappers in the Pentagon predicted we would lose. That was the "missile gap."

President Johnson's budget message to Congress later this month will mark the end of the race. For the first time, the United States is reducing the number of ICBMs it plans to buy. Instead of the 1,300 Minutemen the Defense Department and the White House said last year would be necessary, Congress will be asked for money to build toward only 1,200. Plans for other long-range missiles remain the same. We have 646 land and sea based rockets ready to fire today; by the end of this decade, when the plans will be completed, we will have 1,846.

Russia, despite Mr. Khrushchev's threats to turn out ICBMs "like sausages," is far behind—so far behind, our satellite reconnaissance shows, that her ICBMs do not provide enough targets for all of our planned missiles and bombers. That, plus improvements in the Minuteman, permit us to cut back.

Russia can never catch up if we are reasonably cautious. It takes more than one missile to be sure of destroying another, since they are not 100 per cent reliable and accurate. Russia would have to build two, three or four ICBMs in order to be sure of getting one of ours. She would have to run several times as fast as the United States—indefinitely—even to catch up. There is not the slightest sign that she can or will do this.

Instead, there is every indication that Russia is accepting second place and making the best of it. She is giving up hopes—if she ever had them—of attacking us with the rockets Mr. Khrushchev likes to rattle. She is making do with small, remote-control "wars of national liberation" and "peace" proposals designed to enhance the position of the Red Bloc.

That's not a bad result of the missile race. With a strong non-nuclear force backed up by the threat of our nuclear arsenal, we ought to be able to handle the little wars when they threaten our vital interests. Perhaps we can even turn some of those peace proposals to our own good.

The 1960s then are better than we expected a short but exciting six years ago. These may not be the most pleasant of years, but we'll make it.

*Back in School*